

# CORAL REEFS

## *Protecting our nation's coral reefs*



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**C**oral reefs are some of the oldest and most economically and biologically important ecosystems in the world, yet they face a number of serious threats, including land-based pollution, overfishing, climate change and coral bleaching, coral disease, recreational overuse and misuse, and lack of public awareness.

The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program supports effective management and sound science to preserve, sustain and restore valuable coral reef ecosystems for future generations.

To address the complex nature of the threats that face coral reef ecosystems, the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) brings together expertise from across NOAA for a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and managing coral reef ecosystems. This partnership includes more than 30 offices from NOAA's National Ocean Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service. The CRCP also facilitates and supports many partnerships with scientific, private, government and nongovernmental groups at local, state, federal and international levels.

The CRCP serves as the Secretariat for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, which was established in June 1998 by Presidential Executive Order. Through the coordinated efforts of its members, including 12 federal agencies and seven states and territories, NOAA and the Task Force have helped build and lead U.S. efforts to protect, restore and sustainably use the nation's valuable coral reef ecosystems.

As co-chair of the Task Force, and as directed by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (CRCA), NOAA has the responsibility and expertise to help conserve coral reef ecosystems for future generations. To this end, the CRCP works with its partners to conduct coral reef mapping, monitoring and assessment, natural and socioeconomic research and modeling, outreach and education, and management and stewardship activities.

### **What Does NOAA Do To Protect Reefs?**

The CRCP addresses the priorities and mandates laid out by the Coral Reef Conservation Act and the nation's major blueprints for reef conservation: the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy. The CRCP focuses on priority areas where

NOAA has expertise and the ability to address key threats to reefs directly or through the work of partner organizations. NOAA's activities include:

- Assessing and characterizing U.S. coral reefs through mapping and monitoring
- Reducing impacts of coastal uses like land development, tourism and marine commerce
- Reducing the adverse impacts of fishing
- Reducing the effects of pollution from land and water
- Researching the causes of and effective responses to coral disease
- Improving the use and effectiveness of marine protected areas (MPAs)
- Reducing international threats to coral reefs

### **Where Does NOAA Carry Out Coral Reef Conservation Activities?**

The CRCP supports coral reef conservation in the 7 U.S. states, territories, and U.S. federal waters where coral reefs are found. In the U.S. Pacific region, this includes American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and Hawaii, and includes Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the U.S. Atlantic/Caribbean region. The CRCP also supports coral reef conservation activities internationally, including the Pacific Freely Associated States.

### **For More Information**

For the latest news on NOAA's coral reef activities, information on funding opportunities, as well as background information on coral reefs and tips on things you can do to help protect reefs, visit the CRCP Web site at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>.

Public access to NOAA's coral reef data, products, and publications is available through the NOAA Coral Reef Information System at <http://www.coris.noaa.gov>. CoRIS is a single point of access to NOAA coral reef information and data products, and provides access to resources like informational essays, aerial photos, coral bleaching reports, management guides, scientific reports, an extensive illustrated glossary, professional exchanges and additional information on NOAA's efforts to understand, manage and protect coral reef ecosystems.

- Reducing the impacts of climate change on coral reefs,

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- including mitigation of coral bleaching
- Researching deep-sea coral ecosystems
- Increasing public awareness through outreach and education
- Supporting research and management of the Marine National Monument
- Coordinating three Coral Reef Research Institutes and related programs
- Coordinating two grant programs with seven categories for funding. 🐟